

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

ONLY A BUSINESS MAN. By MAY DRYDEN.

CHAPTER XX.

SUMMER was nearly at a close now. The evenings were beginning to draw in, and chilly folks to think it time to light their fires.

It had been a summer full of pleasure to the young Carfields, who had, with only one exception, enjoyed it to their hearts' content. That exception was Daniel.

The very baby himself had profited by the friendship of his brothers and sisters with Clarence and Gordon, and never wearied of listening long tales of the delightful adventures he had in the big hay-field beside the little black-and-white house, where, day after day, Phoebe turned him in to play, knowing that nothing very dreadful could happen to him in the safe, level field. Here, too, Clarence would often come; sometimes rejoicing the baby-mind with her inexhaustible store of nursery-tales; sometimes tempting the baby-palate with dainties hitherto all unknown to it; sometimes, if the truth must be known, encouraging the little lad to chatter about his elder brother and sister, whom she admired more and more, as she saw the reverence and love the younger ones had for them.

The truth was that Phoebe had fallen into the hands of a genuine Good Samaritan. There are some such in the world, though they be few and far between. People who cannot pass by on the other side and leave behind a neighbour wanting, whether it be for food or friendship; philanthropists, who distribute, not gold only, but good deeds, and good words, and goodwill to those who need. Who can say how often it happens that the latter are far more welcome than the former?

It was not necessary that people's bodies should be starving before Gordon and Clarence Fenchurch felt bound to help them.

They could no more have refused kindly sympathy to an overwrought mind and spirit than they could have turned away a hungry little child from their door. The latter was an utter impossibility to both of them.

Clarence manoeuvred carefully to help Phoebe in such a way as not to hurt her pride, of which she had a good share.

So a new delight crept into the matron-sister's quiet life—a delight about which she did not care to question herself too much; but at which she wondered sometimes, pondering gravely over its strangeness, and almost grateful that she had not known it before, since now the freshness of it was so sweet.

There had been no break in her quiet happiness during these summer months—no interruption to her peace of mind, save on one occasion, when the meddlesome officiousness of Mrs. Welsh had separated her from Deborah Leighton for the time being, and excepting a passing uneasiness now and then as to Daniel.

Poor Daniel was learning, for the first time in his life, what it was to care very much for anyone besides himself, and he found the lesson a hard one. He was in love with Clarence Fenchurch, worshipping her with all the force of his passionate and morbid nature. This new experience did not improve him. He was selfish in it, as he had been in every act of his self-seeking existence—cruelly selfish, with regard to one poor little heart which he had crushed remorselessly.

Daniel had thought that he loved his cousin Netta. He had certainly been fond of her. She appreciated him, and, as he

believed, understood his finer feelings. She knew what a genius he was, and what trials his sensitive nature had to struggle against. He had certainly intended to marry her one of these days, when he should be able to keep a wife without inconveniencing himself; and he had taken no pains to conceal his intentions from Netta.

But now——? Well, now this young lord of creation had seen someone who pleased his fancy better than his old love; and so he threw his affection for his cousin off, as he might have cast away a worn-out glove, regardless of her disappointed hopes.

Once, indeed, when on some occasion of special rudeness on his part to Netta, Luke had administered to him a severe rebuke—just that once it had occurred to Daniel Carfield that he was, perhaps, not acting precisely as a gentleman ought to act.

But he soothed his conscience with an oft-repeated fallacy.

"Girls," said he to himself, "do not love as men do; they have not the innate power of divine passion. Netta may feel her disappointment a little; that is not surprising"—and he raised his fine eyes complacently to his toilet-glass—"but she will not suffer as I should, if an unkind fate were to separate me from Clarence."

He had already persuaded himself that Clarence was as deeply attached to him as he was to her, though she had never shown him any mark of special favour. On the contrary, it was only her regard for Phoebe and Luke that induced her to treat him with friendliness even.

He certainly dwelt much on what his feelings would be, should she not love him; but that was only in love-sick poems. In reality, her rejection of him was a contingency he did not for a moment contemplate.

Such was Daniel's state of mind on that memorable Saturday when Peter brought Dick home to tea.

Dick Sanders was precocious in his insight into people's characters—that there was not a doubt about; probably because he had cultivated a habit of observation as being useful to him in his profession, and was of a decidedly sympathetic temperament. His precocity in one respect was, however, more than balanced by his backwardness in others. He was a thorough boy at heart, as was evinced by his partiality for Peter's company, and, though a gentleman in word and deed—capable even, at times, of acting with great tact—he was not more careful to keep out of

mischievous than other boys, and sometimes achieved consummate blunders.

This being the case, it was not wonderful, perhaps, that his very first act on Mr. Carfield's premises was fraught with very serious consequences. His cousins were with him, and, as they all three entered the garden, a piece of paper fluttered across the path. Dick's evil genius prompted him to pick it up, and, glancing over it, he put it in his pocket. It evidently amused him, but he declined to show it, and Gordon and Clarence thought no more of it.

After tea, when the older ones were sauntering round the garden, the youthful author produced his little scrap of paper, and gravely asked if the company chose to hear some verses by a love-sick swain which had been committed to his care. Phoebe was absent, busying herself over some not-to-be-neglected household duties, or her tact might even then have averted the catastrophe. As it was, Matty caught the twinkle in Richard Sanders's eye, and, quick to encourage a jest, pressed him to read his poem. To do her justice, she believed it to be his own, and inwardly condemned the egotism that forced his compositions on people who were almost strangers to him.

So Dick read:

"LINES TO CLARENCE."

"Who is your unknown admirer, Clarence?" interpolated he.

"How can I tell, silly boy, if he is unknown?" answered her cousin.

She knew Dick too well, by this time, to be put out of countenance by any verses which he might address to her, and she expected no others on this occasion.

Dick went on reading with much theatrical gesture and emphasis:

"Strangely impenetrable art thou, like the rock
Wherein with pain we seek a hidden jewel.
Of thy closed heart will no key fit the lock?
Oh, sweet my love! Most cruel!"

"Like some poor thief watching a goldsmith's shop,
I watch the diamonds sparkling in thine eyes.
Like tiny mouse gathering the crumbs that drop,
Each word I count a prize."

"I love thee; dost thou know it, sweetheart mine?
I love thee, as the blackbird loves a worm.
Caught in thy charms, as in a spider's line,
Poor fly, I squirm!"

The bathos of the ridiculous lines—for, in truth, they were absolutely ridiculous—thoroughly brought out by Dick's manner of reading them, was irresistible, and, as he finished, all his hearers began to laugh. All but one. Daniel, with

eyes glowing, and voice trembling with passion, confronted Richard Sanders, and spoke :

"Sir, those verses are my property. How dare you meddle with them?"

"Dare!" laughed Dick, not in intention aggravatingly, but, in reality, intensely so to the peevish poet.

Daniel shook with rage, and almost shouted :

"Give them to me at once!"

"Nay; how do I know they belong to you? I think they belong to Clarence. Here, Clarence, will you have your property?"

Just then Phoebe appeared upon the scene.

"Why, Daniel," said she, "what is the matter?"

"Nothing—nothing," answered Clarence quickly. "Give me those verses, Dick, and do not be a donkey!"

Her warning glance and Phoebe's distressed face opened Dick's eyes a little as to what he had been doing.

"There they are," said he. "You must credit me with that last verse, you know. I put it in impromptu. They would have been a very different thing had they been finished by the hand that began them."

Then, turning to Daniel, he added :

"I beg your pardon if I have annoyed you. I hope that you will believe that I did not know, when I found it, that this paper belonged to you."

"Found it!" stormed Daniel. "Do you expect me to believe that? It is some ungentlemanly trick of yours and that little fool Peter's."

Dick's face flushed, but he did not reply, only turned on his heel with a suppressed whistle, as Daniel, his recovered verses in his hand, dashed into the house, and was lost to sight.

"I will go after him," said Luke sternly. "He shall apologise immediately."

"Oh no," said Clarence. "Do leave the poor boy alone. I am sure Dick does not wish him to apologise—do you, Dick?"

"No," said Dick, speaking pleasantly, though with a little effort. "I am awfully sorry to have caused such a disturbance. Clarence, you seem to know him well. Suppose you tell him by-and-by that my offence was unintentional?"

"I will," said Clarence, and presently went indoors with the intention of keeping her word.

CHAPTER XXI.

CLARENCE found Daniel pacing moodily up and down the dining-room, a black look of wrath still on his handsome face. As he turned towards her, his expression seemed to her so ridiculous in its overdone tragedy that she could hardly refrain from laughing. However, she did not even smile, for she was anxious to set him at his ease again, feeling that for once he really was the aggrieved person. So she spoke to him pleasantly :

"I am a deputation to ask you to rejoin us, Daniel. Will you not come?"

"Miss Fenchurch, for you I would do much. But do not ask me to come out again to-night."

"Nonsense! Why should you not? Believe me, you make too much of the whole affair. Can you not forgive my cousin's silly jest?"

"He is your cousin. I will forgive him, Miss Fenchurch," said Daniel solemnly.

Clarence thought what a foolish prig the boy was, but only said :

"That's a sensible boy. Then you will come out with me now?"

It was an unfortunate speech. Daniel fired up at once.

"Miss Fenchurch," said he, "why do you always treat me as a boy? I am no boy. I am a man, with all a man's passions and feelings, and I will prove it to you."

He came close up to her, and went on speaking.

"Listen to me—nay," as she made a movement to go, "but you shall listen whether you desire to or not. But you will hear me kindly, I know. My darling, you must long since have seen what I would tell you. I love you—I love you, my own!"

Clarence was so taken by surprise by his torrent of words, that she could not move at first; now she raised her hand to check him.

He caught at it, and would have kissed it, but that she drew it coldly away.

"Hush!" said she. "Let me hear no more. You forget yourself very strangely."

"I do; you are right, as you always are. I forget myself, and remember only you. Give me an answer, Clarence, for pity's sake! Do you love me?"

"No!" said she sternly. "Most certainly not. That is my answer."

"You do not? Ah, unsay the cruel words!"

"I repeat them. Of course I do not

love you. I never even liked you, Mr. Daniel Carfield, and your present conduct makes me despise you. It is best I should tell you in plain words what I mean. In my opinion, a man who can intentionally win the heart of a loving and trusting girl, only to fling it away when won, is a man whom no true-hearted woman can ever respect—much less love."

"You are thinking of my cousin Netta," cried Daniel. "Remember that when, in my youthful folly, I thought I loved her, I had never seen you. Blame my fate for that, not me. Who, having seen you, could care for a poor, shallow-minded—"

"Hush—be quiet! For shame!" cried Clarence, as to her horror the door opened, and she saw poor Netta herself, with her pale face full of mute woe, gazing at the scene. The warning had come too late. She had overheard Daniel's last words. The boy had his back to the door, and did not see her. He went on passionately:

"I repeat it: who would care for her, having known you?"

"Are you mad?" cried Clarence, touching his arm, and motioning towards Netta. "Be silent! Oh, my poor child, go away!"

"No, stay there, Netta," cried Daniel, who was really almost beside himself with rage, wounded vanity, and disappointed love. "Stay there, and hear that for you—do you understand?—for you this dearest wish of my heart is denied me! Do you hear?"

Netta stood still, only trembling, and turning, if possible, a shade whiter than before. Her cousin's cruel words struck her to the heart.

Clarence crossed over to her, and put her arm around her. Netta made a feeble movement as though to repulse her, but she would not be repulsed. She spoke again to Daniel, in a voice full of concentrated indignation and contempt:

"Sir, the boyhood which you repudiate is the only possible excuse for your disgraceful loss of self-control. If you have a spark of manhood in you, go and relieve us of your presence."

"I will not go until I have come to an understanding with you. I have a right to an explanation."

"No explanation is necessary. Nothing but conceit could prevent you from seeing that you are not likely, at present, to inspire respect or love."

"If you do not love me, it must be because you love someone else. Is it my

brother—is it Luke who has supplanted me?"

Clarence had nearly lost her self-control, too, now. She answered with scathing scorn:

"Your impertinence, sir, is only equalled by your want of temper."

"Then it is Luke! And you can reject a man of power, and passion, and keen intellect, for a mere clerk in a warehouse! A man who could not put three lines of poetry together to save his life."

Clarence did not condescend to answer him again. Her attention was directed solely to Netta, who she feared every moment would faint in her arms. She was intensely relieved when, as Daniel finished his tirade against Luke, Luke himself entered the room, and, pausing, stood astonished at the extraordinary scene before him.

"You are still indoors then, Miss Fenchurch?" said he. "What can be the matter? Tell me what is amiss, Netta dear?"

"Pray take your brother away, Mr. Carfield," answered Clarence quickly. "I believe he has killed this poor child."

"No," said Netta, struggling to compose herself, and stand up; "no; he has not hurt me. He did not mean to hurt me. I must speak to him."

She moved slowly across the room to where he stood, and laid her hand on his arm:

"Daniel dear," she said, "do not mind what they say about me. I am so sorry for you, dear, and I know you did not mean it."

He flung the little beseeching hand off roughly, and—not looking at the gentle, white face, or he could not have spoken so—said:

"What does it matter to me whether you mind or not? It is you who stand between me and my love. I hate you!"

Netta gave one low moan like that of a dumb animal in pain, and sank upon the ground. Nature was more merciful to her than man, and gave her a respite from pain in insensibility. She had fainted.

Clarence sprang towards the poor girl, but Luke was before her. He raised Netta gently in his arms, and laid her on the sofa; then turned to his brother and pointed to the door, saying sternly only one word:

"Go!"

The nature that had been capable of bullying a feeble woman, shrank cowed

before the wrath of a strong man, and Daniel slunk from the room like a hound that has felt his master's whip.

Clarence was kneeling by Netta's side. She looked up at Luke with eyes that were dry, certainly, but glowing with a fire that he had never seen there before—the fire of intense indignation.

"Send Phœbe here, please," said she, "and tell Dick to go home. Gordon must wait for me; I will tell him to explain to you presently."

Luke obeyed, and in a few minutes returned with Phœbe and Matty. Matty had brought remedies with her and began immediately to administer them, merely remarking that she supposed this was some more of Master Daniel's work, since she had met him on the stairs looking more like a madman than ever. Phœbe guessed a part of what had happened, but was puzzled to account for Netta's share in the matter, not having known that she was in the house. She thought it odd, too, that Clarence would not stay with them until their cousin recovered, but insisted on leaving them at once. Clarence was in some danger of breaking down herself, and, once outside the room, she did give way to a few tears, which would probably have been more had not Luke followed her.

"They do not want me in there," said he. "What does it all mean? Will you not tell me, Clarence?"

She braced herself with an effort. Daniel's words still rang in her ears, and the remembrance of them caused her cheek to flush uneasily at the sound of Luke's voice.

"I will ask Gordon to tell you," said she coldly.

"No; do tell me yourself," he pleaded. "What is it? Have I done anything, Clarence?"

Clarence's sense of justice, which was very strong, forced her to admit that Luke had not done anything, and that she had no right to be angry with him because Daniel had behaved badly.

But, as she hesitated, the thought crossed her mind that, though she had no reason to be angry with Luke, she had good cause for anger with herself. Daniel's words gained a fresh sting as she perceived that there had been some truth in them. Her cheek glowed afresh, and she hastened to put an end to the interview. As coldly and shortly as she could, she gave Luke an account of what had happened, suppressing, of course, his brother's allusion to

himself. That allusion had hurt her more than she knew at the time.

Just then all thought of self was swallowed up in her pity for Netta. Now the words recurring to her showed her a feeling in her heart, the existence of which she had not recognised before. She felt that she had an internal enemy to guard against, and she said good-bye to Luke in a manner so restrained as to add to his distress and bewilderment.

All that night poor Netta Heard was very ill. When her cousins found in the morning that Daniel had left the house, and gone away without telling anyone whither, they did not dare to let her know of his departure.

A LITTLE MORE PLANT LORE.

IN our article on "Plant Lore" of a fortnight ago, brief mention was made of the mandrake. So much legendary lore and so many strange fables have had their origin in this gruesome root, that we may well devote some more space to the "Devil's Candle," as the Arabians call it, and endeavour to trace if any and what analogy there be between it and the mandragoras of the Greeks, and the Soma of the Indian mythology.

The mandrake is so called from the German mandragen—"resembling man." At least, so says Professor Dyer; but we confess that this derivation does not quite content us. The botanical name is *Mandragora officinalis*, and sometimes the May-apple, or *Podophyllum peltatum*, is also called mandrake, but the actual plant of fact and fancy belongs to the *Solanum*, or potato family.

Although one may doubt if the English name be really derived from the German mandragen, it is certain that the Germans have long regarded the plant as something uncanny. Other names which they have for it are *Zauberwurzel*, or Sorcerer's Root, and *Hexenmännchen*, or Witch's Mannikin; while they made little dolls or idols from it, which they regarded with superstitious veneration, and called *Erdmann* or Earthman. The story of the mandrake which a Leipzig merchant sent to his brother in Riga, "for luck," was told in our previous article.

Yet in other places, according to the same authority, the mandrake was popularly supposed to be "perpetually watched over by Satan, and if it be pulled up at

certain holy times, and with certain invocations, the evil spirit will appear to do the bidding of the practitioner." A common superstition once, in the South of England, was that the mandrake had a human heart at its root, and, according to Timbs, it was generally believed that the person who pulled it would instantaneously fall dead; that the root shrieked or groaned whenever separated from the earth, and that whoever heard the shriek would either die shortly afterwards or become afflicted with madness.

To this last superstition there is direct reference made by Shakespeare in *Romeo and Juliet*:

And shrieks like mandrakes torn out of the earth,
That living mortals hearing them run mad.

Frequent allusions to this superstition are to be found in the old poets, although it is held by some that the effects claimed for decoctions of the mandrake really refer to those of the nightshade. This confusion has certainly arisen at times, but the most general idea concerning mandrake was that it was a stimulant rather than a narcotic. It is true that Shakespeare regarded mandragora as an opiate, for he makes Cleopatra to exclaim:

Give me to drink mandragora,
That I might sleep out this great gap of time
My Antony is away.

And, again, when in *Othello* he makes Iago say:

Nor poppy, nor mandragora,
Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world,
Can ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep
Which thou owedst yesterday.

But, on the other hand, we find Apuleius—himself, by the way, not unsuspected of magical arts—writing that when the root of the mandrake is steeped in wine it produces vehement intoxication. The same idea is reflected in Mrs. Browning's *Dead Pan*:

In what revels are ye sunk
In old Ethiopia?
Have the Pygmies made you drunken
Bathing in mandragora,
Your divine pale lips that shiver
Like the lotus in the river?

And there can be little doubt that the mysterious "Lhasis," referred to by Sir William Davenant—a word whose etymology is so obscure—is nothing else than the mandrake or mandragora. If so, then we see that the plant was valued for its exciting and stimulating effects rather than as an opiate.

Many commentators, and most dictionaries, dispose of Reuben's mandrakes as

something altogether different from the plant now known by the name. But there is really no warrant for such a conclusion. The *Mandragora officinalis* is quite common in Celicia, Syria, and elsewhere in the East, and is easily identifiable with the root of Baaras, which Josephus describes in the Wars of the Jews. This root, he says, is in colour like to that of flame, and towards the evening it sends out a certain ray like lightning. It is not easily to be pulled, it will not yield quietly, and it is certain death to anyone who dares pull it, unless he hang it with the head downwards. As to the uses of the root, Josephus continues: "After all his pains in getting it, it is only valuable on account of one virtue it hath, that if it only be brought to sick persons, it quickly drives away those called Demons, which are no other than the spirits of the wicked, which enter into men that are alive, and kill them, unless they can obtain some help against them," and the root was a useful stimulant, although in Baaras, at any rate, it seems to have lost its reputation as a love-philtre. It is noteworthy that Josephus also tells how Solomon had great skill in enchantments, and cast out devils by means of a root, an accomplishment he is said to have learned from some of the numerous foreign ladies with whom he surrounded himself.

Now it is interesting to turn from the old Jewish historian to the old English herbalist, Gerarde, who, in 1597, wrote in his *Herball* pointing out how, by "the corruption of time and the error of some," mandragora has been mistaken for what he calls Circaea, or Enchanter's Nightshade. But of the mandrake, or mandragoras, Gerarde says: "There hath been many ridiculous tales brought up of this plant; whether of old wives, or some runagate surgeons, or physickmongers, I know not; but sure some one or more that sought to make themselves famous or skillful above others were the first brokers of the error" that the root resembles a man. "They add further," he says, "that it is never, or very seldome to be found growing naturally, but under a gallows, where the matter that hath fallen from the dead body hath given it the shape of a man, and the matter of a woman the substance of a female plant; with many other such doltish dreames. The fable further affirms that he who would take up a plant thereof . . . he should surely die in short space after."

This is clearly Josephus's "root of Baaras" over again. Gerarde further holds it to be the identical mandragoras of the Greek, and called *circea* because it was used by Circe for love-potions and enchantments. If this be so, then what was the "moly" given to Odysseus by Hermes wherewith to counteract the charms of Circe? Was it a totally different plant, or was it merely the same applied on the homeopathic principle? Mr. Andrew Lang thinks they cannot be the same, because the "moly" is described by Homer as having a black root and a white flower, while the mandragoras is described by Pliny as having a yellow flower and white, fleshy roots. But we know that Homer is always confusing in the matter of colours, and it is possible that various shades of the purplish flower of the true mandrake might appear to one as white, and to another as yellow. Upon the whole, the probability is that the two names meant one and the same plant, for the characteristics are too peculiar to be alike possessed by different species. If the moly were not mandragoras there is nothing else known to modern botany that it could be, unless it were rue, with which some scholars have sought to identify it, but not, as we think, conclusively.

The learned author of *Pseudosia Epidemica*, or *Vulgar Errors*, at any rate was clearly of opinion that moly and mandragoras were one and the same. He quotes also from Pliny that the ancient way of pulling the root was to get on the windward side of the plant, and with a sword describe three circles about it, at the same time the operator keeping his face turned to the west. The dangers attending the plucking of mandrakes are shrewdly disposed of with the remark that it is "derogatory unto the Providence of God . . . to impose so destructive a quality on any plant . . . whose parts are usefull unto many." The same author mentions the superstition that the mandrake grows under gallows, fructified by the decaying bodies of criminals, that it grows both male and female, and that it shrieks upon eradication. This last idea he derides as "false below confute, arising perhaps from a small and stridulous noise which, being firmly rooted, it maketh upon divulsion of parts." "A slender foundation," he remarks, "for such a vast conception; for such a noise we sometimes observe in other plants—in parsnips, liquorish, eringium, flags, and others."

The belief that the root of the mandrake resembles the human figure is characterised by the writer, last quoted, as a "conceit not to be made out by ordinary inspection, or any other eyes than such as regarding the clouds behold them in shapes conformable to pre-apprehensions." It is traceable to the bifurcation of the root; a formation, however, which is frequently found "in carrots, parsnips, briony, and many others." There is no other importance, therefore, to be attached to "the epithet of Pythagoras, who calls it anthropomorphon, and that of Columella, who terms it *semihomo*;" nor to Albertus, "when he affirmed that mandrakes represent mankind with the distinction of either sex." The roots, which were commonly sold in various parts of Europe "unto ignorant people, handsomely made out the shape of man or woman. But these are not productions of nature but contrivances of art, as divers have noted. . . . This is vain and fabulous which ignorant people and simple women believe; for the roots which are carried about by impostors are made of the roots of canes, bryony, and other plants," and the method of manufacture is then explained by the erudite doctor. What we wish to bring out by these quotations is the prevalence of the superstition, and the existence of the German *erdmann*, as matters of common knowledge in the latter half of the seventeenth century.

But the superstition can be traced still later, for as recently as 1810 some of these root-images were to be seen on sale in certain parts of France, and were purchased, we are told, as love-charms. We are told that even now at this very day bits of the *Mandragoras officinalis* are worn by the young men and maidens of Greece to bring them fortune in their love-affairs.

In some parts of England—viz., in Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, and Somersetshire, the bryony is called mandrake, and a small portion of the root is frequently given to horses among their food to make them sleek and improve their condition, and it is still also sold "for medicinal and other purposes." Yet in other places it is called "Devil's Food," because Satan is supposed to be perpetually watching over it and to jealously guard its magical properties. It is partly on this account, and partly because of its supposed effect in stimulating the passions, that the Arabs sometimes call the mandrake *Tuphacel-sheitan*, or Devil's Apple, although it is

otherwise known as the Stone Apple. In many parts of Europe, the mandrake is believed to possess, in common with some other plants, the power of opening locks and unshoeing horses.

The belief that the mandrake had some peculiar association with the devil has made it a favourite plant with sorcerers and workers of enchantment in all ages. Lord Bacon refers to it as a favourite in his time, "whereof witches and impostors make an ugly image, giving it the form of a face at the top of the root," and leaving the natural threads of the root "to make a broad beard down to the foot." Mr. Conway, however, says that the superstition rightly belonging to the mandrake was often transferred to other roots—probably in ignorance as to the identity of the real plant. "Thus," he says, "the author of *Secrets du Petit Albert* says that a peasant had a bryonia root of human shape, which he received from a gipsy. He buried it at a lucky conjunction of the moon with Venus" (the reader will not fail to note the reference to the Goddess of Love) "in spring, and on a Monday, in a grave, and then sprinkled it with milk in which three field-mice had been drowned. In a month it became more humanlike than ever. Then he placed it in an oven with vervain, wrapped it afterwards in a dead man's shroud, and so long as he kept it he never failed in luck at games or work." Then we learn from the same author that a German horse-dealer, of Augsburg, once lost a horse, and being poor, wandered in despair to an inn. There some men gave him a mandrake, and on his return home he found a bag of ducats on the table. His wife, however, did not like the business, and persuaded the man to return to give back the root to those from whom he got it. But he could not find the men again, and soon after the house was burned down, and both horse-dealer and wife perished.

The only suggestion from this story is that the mandrake was supposed to bring "devil's luck," although, if so, it is difficult to understand why the erdmanns were so carefully preserved from generation to generation. One German writer, Rist, says that he has seen one more than a century old, which had been kept in a coffin, on which was a cloth bearing a picture of a thief on the gallows, and a mandrake growing underneath.

Coles, who wrote *The Art of Simpling*, in 1656, says the witches use the

mandrake-roots, "according to some, or, as I rather suppose, the roots of briony, which simple people take for the true mandrake, and make thereof an ugly image, by which they represent the person on whom they intend to exercise their witchcraft." But their professions must at times have been even larger, for it is on record that a witch was executed near Orleans, in France, about 1605, who was charged with having kept a living mandrake-fiend, having the form of a female ape!

So much for the mandrake, of which, however, a good deal more might be said did space permit. What we have wished to establish is, that it was identical with the mandragora, and also with the mandragoras of the Greeks; that it was probably also the briony; that superstitions have attached to it in all countries and from time immemorial, which ascribed to it occult virtues; that the powers it exercised varied a good deal according to locality and time, but that two main conceptions have almost universally prevailed—viz, that it was a stimulant, and a potent instrument in affairs of the heart.

What, then, is the Soma, or Homa, of the Hindu mythology—the ambrosia of the Indian gods? It has been the subject of much discussion and some difference among comparative mythologists, but its mythological origin and signification are beyond the scope of the present article. It but suffices to say that Soma was the chief deity among the ancient Hindus—the author of life, the giver of health, the protector of the weak, and the guide to immortality. Once he took upon himself the form of man, but was slain by men and braised in a mortar. The similarity with the Christian legend is remarkable, and the method of death should be borne in mind. After his death, Soma rose in flame to heaven, "to be the benefactor of the world and the mediator between God and man."

One of the articles of faith with the Hindus, therefore, is that they must hold communion with Soma, and they are taught thus to pray to him: "O Soma! thou art the strength of our heroes and the death of our enemies, invincible in war; fulfil our vows in battle, fight for us! None can resist thee, give us superiority! O Soma immortal! May we drink to thee and be immortal like thee!" Mr. Baring-Gould says that the whole legend of Soma is but the allegorical history of the plant *Sarcostemma viminalis*, which is regarded

with passionate love "because of the intoxicating liquor which is derived from its juice. It is regarded as a godsend. The way in which it is prepared is by crushing it in a mortar; the juice is then thrown on the sacrificial flame and so rises to heaven." The same writer tells us that a similar worship prevailed among the Iranians, who called the juice Homa, but they did not ferment it, and although they ascribed to it divine attributes, they did not make Homa a supreme deity. But both with them and with the Hindus, "the partaking of the juice was regarded as a sacramental act, by virtue of which the receiver was embued with a portion of the divine nature."

A more recent writer, the author of Bible Folklore, says that the "old Soma was the same as the Persian Homa, a brilliant god, who gives sons to heroes, and husbands to maidens. The juice of the plant, pounded in an iron mortar, is greenish in colour, and is strained through a cloth and mixed with the sap of a pomegranate branch; the yellow juice is then strained through a vessel with nine holes. Among the Parsees it is drunk, not as by the Brahmans in large quantities by sixteen priests, but in small quantities by the two chief priests, and is thus not intoxicating."

The symbol is confused with the deity, and "Soma is at once the life-giving spring of the juice of immortality, and the juice itself"—a confusion not without analogy in some of the superstitions we have narrated of the mandrake. But of old, Soma was drunk as mead was by the Scandinavians before and after battle. It gave power and good fortune as well as light and happiness, and when elevated into a god was supposed to be the origin of all creation.

Now of the *Sarcostemma* it is to be noted that it belongs to the family of *Asclepiadea*, which have all something more or less "fleshy" looking about some parts of them, which, like the *Apocynæ*, were in the old world credited with medicinal properties, and which are generally acrid, stimulating, and astringent. There are many poisonous members of the family, such as the dog's-bane and wolf's-bane of our own country, favourite plants with the enchanters, while the cowplant of Ceylon is of the same species.

But in Garrett's Dictionary of India it is stated that the Soma of the Vedas is no longer known in India, and the same statement is repeated by many writers. It is

certainly not conclusive that the *Sarcostemma viminalis* was the plant of wondrous virtues that was deified. On the other hand, we find that these ascribed virtues closely correspond with those attributed to the mandrake, and it is known that the Aryan people received many of their ideas and superstitions from the old Jewish tribes. We have seen, further, that belief in the peculiar power of the mandrake in certain directions was a settled belief at a very early period of the Jewish history, and without pursuing the comparison farther than would be quite suitable for these pages, we arrive at the very probable suggestion that the original Soma was neither more than less than the mandrake of Reuben, the "Baaras root" of Josephus, the mandragoras of the Greeks, the moly of Homer, the mandragora of Shakespeare, the mandragen of Germany, and the mandrake, again, of England.

ALDRIDGE'S.

FEW of the busy corners of London are more interesting in their way than the crossing by St. Martin's Lane and Long Acre, where many different lines of traffic meet and intersect, while yet no particular class predominates, of human or of equine passengers. St. James and St. Giles here meet on an equal footing; and, if now and then a poor cab-horse founders on the slippery pavement, the same fate may attend the high-stepping bay of the young Marquis of Corinth, as he drives along in the new curricule, fresh from the coach-maker's shop in Long Acre.

Time out of mind there have been coach-makers, and those who deal in coach-makers' wares, on the strip of ground which lying just along the north side of the wall of the old Convent Garden, was a good furrow long from end to end and narrow in proportion—a strip of land that the Saxon hind may have ploughed with his span of oxen, while fat monks watched him at work as they looked over the garden-wall. A place for wheelwrights, for cartwrights, for bridlesmiths, and loriners; and so, with the progress of luxury and refinement, the favoured haunt of admittedly the best carriage-makers in the world.

And it is not rash to assert that somewhere about St. Martin's Lane there has been from the same antiquity a mart of horses of some kind. Strangely tenacious of prescription in this way are buyers and

sellers of horses, and often enough in the outskirts of some old walled town, where the walls and gates have long since disappeared, horse-dealers trot their horses, whoop, and crack their whips, on the same ground as formerly when tower, and battlements, and the strong portcullised-gate looked upon the scene, and soldiers watched the courses and criticised the paces from the city-wall. In this way the Barbican, just outside the London Wall, came to be, as it is now, a place for horse-sales. And so Smithfield, where, when it was an open market, poor foundered jades would be sold for a few pounds, or even shillings, is described by FitzStephen in the thirteenth century as a celebrated rendezvous of fine horses brought thither to be sold. Thither came Earls, Barons, Knights, and a swarm of citizens; races were run there, and the course was cleared with shouts. In like manner St. Martin's Lane, just beyond the precincts of the Court, and the more or less fortified boundaries of the liberties of Westminster, has always been haunted by the cognoscenti in horsecflesh. And here, in sight of the winding lane, with its dull red houses and unpretentious shops, above which rises the tower of St. Martin's Church, showing white against the London haze, we may fancy we see the horse-dealers of a former age dashing up and down with a Spanish jennet, or perhaps a heavy Flemish coach-horse on sale, while a select audience of country gentlemen and City knights, with, mayhap, a courtly physician with his gold-headed cane, look on critically and yet with approbation. And turning again to the busy crossing, and its multitudinous, not to say tumultuous, traffic, you may appreciate the wonderful expansion of the world of horses, and wonder whence come these squadrons and battalions of horses moving on in a never-ending procession—whence they come and whither they may be going.

There are busier corners than this in the City, no doubt, when the great heart of London is in full throb; but then there are hours and hours when the great City thoroughfares are as quiet almost as the high-street of a country town. But here the traffic never rests altogether. In the small hours of the morning, the hansoms and broughams of the votaries of pleasure will meet the rumbling waggons piled high with produce for Covent Garden, while the occasional four-wheeler, loaded with portmanteaux and trunks, for an early train—happy travellers! who will see the sun

rise over the misty meadows, or, perhaps, flashing over the broad sea—is in danger of being run into by the light carts of the greengrocers and fruit-dealers, who are dashing in, hoping to get the pick of the market. And then the omnibuses run late into the night, and start early in the morning; while the miscellaneous traffic—railway-vans, parcels' vans, the innumerable vehicles from shops and warehouses, the carriages of the town travellers: the jeweller's brougham with its locks and bars, like a travelling safe; the britchka of the silk-mercier, lined with costly robes; the dog-cart crammed with glove-boxes, with dog-skins, as a faint reminder of its original purpose—all these and many others running to and fro continually, with costers' carts and country pony-chaises threading their way among the lines of more ponderous vehicles, are but a sample taken at random from this moving world on wheels. And the horses who are the moving spirits in all this whirligig—what a great army of horses goes to make up the display!—their ranks constantly thinned by casualties, reduced by disease, and by the terrible wear and tear of the hard roads, the constant stoppages, the strain on muscle and nerve, the chafing harness, the harsh curbs, and the stinging whip ever cracking behind them. And yet the strength of the force is kept up—not without difficulty, perhaps, for the home supply is quite unequal to the demand. English farmers have nearly given up breeding horses, and stud-farms are rarely profitable undertakings. But everywhere in horse-breeding districts on the Continent, the British dealer is to be met with. His voice may be heard at Norman fairs, among the blue blouses and balloon-like silk caps of the natives, or among the Flemings and the Dutch, or even with the sonorous Spaniards, the original horse-dealer of the old world, among the dusty plains of Castille. Our business, however, is not with these, who are among the Corinthians of the trade, but rather with the motley crowd which congregates about any well-established repository for the sale of horses—such as that famous one close by, which has been known for more than a century as Aldridge's.

On an ordinary day, Aldridge's is quiet enough. Sometimes a horse is being shown to a possible purchaser, or a coach-proprietor is looking round to find an animal that will suit him. But let Wednesday morning come, when the season is on for

sales, and the whole place is full of life and bustle. Outside in the lane a miscellaneous string of vehicles is drawn up by the kerb—hansoms and dog-carts, with a Stanhope phaeton plastered with the mud of country lanes, that has dried and been coated afresh over and over again: a phaeton that has seen better days, with its plated mountings shining through the dirt like a touch of gentle breeding in one reduced to the lowest depths of misery.

"Yes, I was a gentleman once," said a shadow of a man with a dirty face, and foul, battered hat, and a long, thick greatcoat—this hot, shimmering summer day—held together by string, and quite pitiable in its patchwork of faded colours. "I've driven my four-in-hand with the Coaching Club. Well, horses have brought me low, but I shall stick to 'em to the last."

"That's right, old man," said his companion, a bullet-headed fellow more respectably dressed, but who had evidently risen to his present position of horse-keeper from a still lower grade; "when you had the pieces you spent them like a gentleman, and was always ready to treat a poor chap to a drink."

There are plenty of these broken-down gentry to be met with about a horse-sale, ready to fetch and carry and do any odd commission for the more prosperous dealers, and some of these hang about the big gates of Aldridge's waiting for a friend, or looking out for a horse that never makes its appearance. But there are others, quite as eccentric in attire, who are full of business and importance, ready to start with a bid for any animal that may be put up, and able, on occasion, to pull out a bag of coins from some corner of their ragged garments. Here is one outside who has quite a jaunty look in his well-brushed paletot of ancient cut, and who only betrays his parsimony in his broken boots. He is a commission-agent among the costers, and if he can pick up a pony at a low figure, no matter what its condition, he knows a customer out of whom he can make a few dollars. And there are people with sufficient confidence in him to lend him the purchase-money.

Entering the wicket-gate at Aldridge's a busy scene meets the eye. Within is a long covered yard, with stables opening on either hand, and a gallery devoted to carriages on sale; a plain, substantial building of a sober, brownish-yellow tint, that is repeated in the soft gravel under the feet. The yard, or, as it may be called

with equal propriety, the hall, is well filled with a motley crowd—motley, that is, in character and physique, for as regards apparel the prevailing hue is quiet and sombre enough, faded brown and well-worn drab, the fancy of the wearers expressed chiefly in hats, of which very few are of the conventional stovepipe variety, and those few curly of brim and low of crown, and generally of the florid Corinthian order. But every other variety of head-gear is here to be seen, from the tall conical felt hat of other days, that recalls the Puritan Fathers, to the miserable low-crowned pot of the present period. But if colour is quite absent from the assemblage there is plenty of form in the cut of the garments—massive seams and abundance of material in the upper works, combined with the tightness of knee and slimmness of calf that characterise the horsey man—and an Irish dealer, with a caubeen on his head and a rug wrapped round his shoulders after the fashion of a mantle, rubs against a burly Yorkshireman a head taller and several pairs of shoulders broader than any of the rest.

The strangest element in the crowd is the gipsy; and several of the tribe can be picked out hanging together in groups, and talking confidentially in their strange patois. Petulengro is here to-day, and Tawno Chickno, and the rest of the tribe whom George Borrow has made familiar to us—brown, and lithe, and slender, with their yellow, oriental eyes and a touch of oriental magnificence in their crimson-and-orange bandannas, knotted carelessly round their throats. Elsewhere it has been surmised that the father of horse-dealers, the old Adam of the fraternity, was probably a Spaniard; but here it may be surmised that he probably had a dash of gipsy blood in his veins. A kind of freshness seems to come over the scene, attendant on the gipsies; a feeling of breezy commons and country lanes, and the blue smoke rising from the group of lowly tents; a feeling enhanced by the smell of hay and the sight of a knowing little fox-terrier, comfortably ensconced on a truss of the same, while a couple of tired countrymen, who have brought up horses, no doubt, from distant parts, are stretched restfully by his side.

There are well-to-do men among the gipsies, with gold ear-rings and finger-rings, and the air of having a bag of golden sovereigns somewhere handy, but there are others who have hardly a shirt to their

backs; but they all chat affably together, as if mere class distinctions were unknown among the brotherhood of the Rommany chals.

More familiar is the everyday type of the London dealers, smart, dapper fellows, with lightly curled whiskers, and garments of fashionable cut, and fitting tight as any glove, with coachmen, and grooms, and a sprinkling of jobmasters, cabmen, and omnibus proprietors.

"Not many left of 'em now, you say, perhaps," suggests a genial horsekeeper, who has something to say to everybody. "The company has swallowed 'em all up, mostly. But there's an old gent now, one of the old sort, owns his 'busses, and his cabs, and his 'osses, and yet with no more pride about him than there is in you or me. Pride! why, bless your heart, he's that humble-minded that he's been known to hail a opposition 'bus rather than ride in one of his own vehicles. Ah, you don't often meet a man like that."

But the auctioneer has appeared in his rostrum in the upper corner of the hall, and the crowd sways back as with a shrill, strident cry, the white-coated stableman brings his horse up with a flourish that is decidedly artistic. It is one of the fine arts indeed, that of showing a horse advantageously, while you would hardly think the dejected, patient-looking animal you saw a moment ago could be the frisky, curvetting animal which arches its neck and waltzes along with so much spirit. Another turn, and, with another wild cry, the attendant dashes down the course with his horse, and back again, when the animal's head is secured tightly in close proximity to the auctioneer's desk. Bang goes the hammer, a sound which makes all the horses wince, while some jump almost out of their skins, and away goes the subject in hand, to be succeeded by another lot in rapid succession.

Our auctioneer does not treat us with the affable urbanity of Mr. Tattersall. He rather rebukes us, and suggests that we are a pretty lot of fellows not to know our own minds, and that he can't waste his time over us; but we take it all in good part, and we feel the horses' legs, and look into their mouths, and watch them intently as they canter down the course. And on the whole we bid pretty briskly. The old gentleman, whose limit is four pounds, makes an offer of three-ten, but is snuffed out by the auctioneer with fifteen pounds, who next knocks him down for seventeen-ten—

the horse, that is, and not the old gentleman—with lightning-like rapidity.

It is necessary to get over the ground quickly, for there are more than two hundred lots to be sold. And in about five minutes a man might become the possessor of a pair of match-horses, a circular-fronted brougham, the harness belonging to the pair, might settle his account, and drive away in his own carriage, engaging a coachman upon the spot—all like the genial old fairy in Cinderella—and all within the compass of two figures, say for ninety-nine pounds nineteen shillings.

All kinds of horses, to suit every man's purse, are disposed of in this manner. A lot of cast Government horses; the surplus stock of London jobmasters; horses imported from Ireland, from Belgium; horses the property of a gentleman, quiet to ride and drive; horses that have been hunted, are quiet in harness, and will carry a lady. All sorts and conditions of horses pass in quick review under the auctioneer's desk.

Then there are carriages. William, with forty pounds in his pocket, may walk into Aldridge's an idle man. He may drive out in half an hour his own horse in his own cab, and, assuming him to have his license all ready, may hail a fare on the spot, and earn his first half-crown before the day is an hour older. Or one could buy a chariot—a real, aristocratic, old-fashioned chariot, swinging on stout leather straps from a strong and massive framework. The original archaic notion of a carriage this, such as was first started about the reign of Elizabeth, with an arrangement of levers and cogged wheels to tighten up the straps; such coaches as lurched through the muddy tracks of olden times, with stout footmen hanging on behind armed with long poles to prise the wheels out of the mud—the origin of the curious poles that footmen still carry sometimes on state occasions. A chariot, too, with an emblazoned hammer-cloth, but a step removed from the toolbox cover on which the coachman sat, but all so wonderfully well preserved; with the old-fashioned drab linings, pockets, and tassels, and arm-rests all complete; that it reminds one of a hoarded guinea still bright and sharp-cut after all the years that have passed since it was coined. But to hoard a chariot, to keep it all fresh in paint and blazonry, and then to send it to be sold at Aldridge's! Now, if Mr. Freeman—not the historian of the Norman Conquest, but the worthy proprietor of Aldridge's—would tell us the history of that chariot it would

be worth while to wait till it is sold—it is No. 196x on the list, and won't be reached just yet.

But our auctioneer has not time for anything of the kind. He will dispose of our famous chariot in half-a-dozen words. "Capital chariot, old-fashioned but good, best maker. What for the chariot?"

And if we had six long-tailed horses to draw it, a coachman in a cabbage wig, and two tall footmen in crimson plush, with pink silk stockings, that chariot should be ours, and we would leave St. Martin's Lane in the lurch and drive away to fairyland.

GROWING OLD.

GROWING old! The pulses' measure

Keeps its even tenour still;
Eye and hand nor fail nor falter,
And the brain obeys the will;
Only by the whitening tresses,
And the deepening wrinkles told,
Youth has passed away like vapour;
Prime is gone, and I grow old.

Laughter hushes at my presence,
Gay young voices whisper lower.
If I dare to linger by it,
All the stream of life runs lower.
Though I love the mirth of children,
Though I prize youth's virgin gold,
What have I to do with either?
Time is telling—I grow old.

Not so dread the gloomy river
That I shrank from so of yore;
All my first of love and friendship
Gather on the farther shore.
Were it not the best to join them
Ere I feel the blood run cold?
Ere I hear it said too harshly,
"Stand back from us—you are old!"

MAN-EATING AND MAN-SACRIFICING.

OUR European nineteenth century standard of right and wrong is certainly not that of all the world, past or present. For instance, man eats and has eaten man, not only without any conscience of wrong, but with a feeling of performing a solemn duty, a religious rite. And in some nations this taste is so ingrained that no amount of teaching seems able to get rid of it. A man-eating man is as incurable as a man-eating tiger. What a typical story is that of the Tupinamba woman, brought up by the Jesuits of Paraguay, of whom, when she lay a dying, her confessor asked: "Now what would you fancy—some fresh oranges, or half a chicken, or a slice of white bread such as the nobles eat?" She was a great pet of the good father; she had been so docile, such a model Christian. They had had her ever since she was a child, and her

conduct had always been edifying. "No," said she slowly, as her thoughts went back to the wars between her tribe and its neighbours, and the feasts that had followed a successful raid. "No; I'm not long for this world, and if there's anything I could eat, it is the pickings off the head of a young Tupia boy." In face of the after-world the old propensity came out strong as death. Palæolithic man used to eat his brethren; and so used his comparatively highly-civilised successor (we must not say descendant) of the new stone age. In Italy, in the dried-up lakes (terra-mares), which contain remains of the old stone age, one finds human bones not gnawed only, but broken for the sake of the marrow—treated just like the beasts' bones among which they lie. In France it is the same; experts say they can tell the difference between the marks of a rat's or tiger's tooth and of that of a man, and no animal has ever got so far as breaking the bones that it mumbles. In our British barrows there is not the slightest doubt, from the arrangement of the remains, that, when a chief was buried, not only were his slaves killed and buried with him, but that their bodies first furnished out the funeral feast. The horrible old Hellenic myths, such as Tantalus cooking his son Pelops as a meal for gods, and Atreus dishing up his brother Thyestes's children, and asking him to dine off them, are survivals of a time when the man-cooking oven was as much an institution in Greece as it was the other day in New Zealand or in Fiji. Dog does not eat dog; very few animals will devour their own kind, unless, like sows or rabbits, they do it under the influence of terror; but man in this, as in some other matters of conduct, soon got below the brutes, even if he was not a cannibal at the outset.

Two distinct reasons led to the horrible custom. In some cases it began in time of famine, and those who adopted it had not strength afterwards to shake it off. In a far larger number of cases it was connected with religion. And here, as in the case of the old Indian woman, there has been a terrible persistence. What nation has made its fondness for autos da fé proverbial? People have been burnt in the name of the God of Love in England, in France, in Germany; but always the sacrifice has been an outrage on public feeling. The crowd has gathered, but it has looked on with horror at what almost everyone felt to be a sickening sight. In Spain the

crowd at an auto da fé was a great deal more jubilant than that at a bull-fight. There was the same excitement, and, to boot, the consciousness that a good work and acceptable to the Most High was being done. Now in the old world it was the people of Canaanite race, Phœnicians and Carthaginians, who were most given to human sacrifices; and in Spain there is a strong dash of Punic blood. Roman history tells how doggedly the Carthaginians struggled against the Roman power in the land where they had built a new Carthage. It has always seemed to me that the hideous auto da fé was another form of the old offerings to Baal and Melkarth.

St. Jerome hated the Scoti; such of their clergy as he had met were heretics who dared to deny Original Sin. He speaks of Pelagius, the arch-heretic, as "bemuddled with his Scotie porridge"; but he may be right in saying that the Attacotti, a Scotie tribe—some of whom he came across in Gaul—were cannibals. If so, famine had doubtless originally led to what by-and-by became an institution. We have all lately seen how readily shipwrecked sailors give in to cannibalism. Many a whaler in the days before steam could tell a tale of the same sort, which never got into the newspapers. One of the causes assigned for cannibalism among the otherwise gentle islanders of the South Seas is the absence of animal food; another is the privations of crews whose canoes were carried out of their course by currents. They would be as little able to resist the pangs of hunger as the sailors on board the *Mignonette's* boat.

One remembers what Josephus says of the siege of Jerusalem; and in France human flesh was actually sold in the markets in the year of grace 1000-1001. At that time there was in France the cruellest famine that ever desolated the country. The "the day of the Lord" was come, said the clergy; the Thousand Years were ended, and this dispensation was over. The people believed and acted on their belief, unlike a celebrated modern Scotch writer on prophecy, who, just after he had foretold the speedy end of the world, bought a long lease of some improving property. The French did not even till their land. "What is the use," they asked, "when the fashion of this world is to pass away?" And so, as there were no crops, there was no food. The wolves came round, killing hundreds who were too weakened to resist them.

Troyes has the unenviable reputation of having opened a human shambles; in other places it was done on the sly, those who were caught doing it openly being burned alive.

In Tierra del Fuego a good deal of human flesh is eaten, because there is so little else to eat. The climate is perhaps the very worst in the world; there are few birds, and no quadrupeds except foxes, and bats, and a few small rodents. Fishing sometimes fails in winter, and then it becomes a question: "Shall we eat the dogs or the old women?" The dogs are good for catching otters; the old women are good for nothing. It seems cruel to hang them up by the heels over a fire of green wood till they are suffocated, and then to tear them in pieces and devour them; but it would be almost as cruel to let them drop behind and die by the road, as more civilised tribes do with their aged and infirm. At any rate, the Fuegians have no compunction about doing it. A young man was telling the crew of the *Challenger* how his grandmother came to her death, and was laughing as he imitated her twistings and turnings in her agony. That anyone should be disgusted at his story he could not understand. "I am telling the truth," he said, for he thought his hearers were questioning his veracity; their shrinking from the horror of his story never occurred to him.

Eating parents is by no means confined to the Fuegians; it is an old and widespread custom. Herodotus, whose truthfulness, they tell us, is being more and more established by every modern discovery, says of the Issedones, a Scythian tribe: "When an old man is on the point of death his relations hurry up their cattle, kill them, and cut them up in bits along with the corpse of the dead man, whom they first solemnly strangle. The mixed meat is eaten at the funeral-feast. Every child is bound to partake of it." The Massagetae, another Scythian tribe, had, we are told, the same custom; and Strabo lays it to the charge of the Irish, who, of course, deny it as strenuously as the Welsh deny Cæsar's charges against the old Britons. "He only wanted," they say, "to set the Roman cockneys gaping. There is as much truth in his tales of British wives with ten or a dozen husbands apiece, and of huge wicker idols full of human beings burned in honour of their gods, as in his travellers' tales about elks with no joints in their legs, that cannot

get up, poor beasts, when once they have lain down." It may be that Strabo—who knows?—is really more deserving of credit than Cæsar.

I do not remember any modern nation that is accused of pappophagy—i.e., killing grandfathers for the sake of eating them; but the Acumas, on the Amazons, and also some hill-tribes in India, are said to eat with solemn rites the parents whom death has taken from them. From the eating under pressure of want, to the sacrificing to get free from famine, is an easy step. When hungry, the savage, whose views of God are always distorted enough, would be sure to have them still more distorted. "Eating," he would argue, "only satisfies the pressing need. To-morrow we are as badly off again. How if, by solemnly eating once for all, and offering the rain-god a share, we could cause the fruits of the earth to grow once more?" Read Tennyson's *Victim*, the actors in which, by the way, are not mere savages:

So thick they died, the people cried:
"The gods are moved against the land.
Help us from famine, and plague, and strife.
What would you have of us? Human life?
Were it our nearest, were it our dearest—
Answer, oh, answer!—we give you his life."

The land is sick, the people diseased,
And blight or famine on all the lea.
The holy gods they must be appeased.

Just as the eating of parents out of piety was a second thought, a hypocritical way of accounting to themselves for what men began to think was not a very creditable proceeding, so the custom of human sacrifices, beginning in a famine-time as an experiment to see if the god was hungry and would condescend to let his worshippers have food as soon as his own appetite should be satisfied, was continued and extended to other things when by some chance it had happened that the killing blight disappeared, or the welcome shower came in answer to the human victim. "It is clear the god likes blood. He gave us plenty of food in return for it. Go to, let us slay a man now that this enemy is threatening us; then will the god surely fight on our side." Anomalous man-eating has gone on at all times; a depraved taste goes back to forms of foulness of which the world at large has got rid. Not long ago there was a case in the papers of a savage in mid-France who used to entice young people into the forest, and kill them with a view to a succession of horrible meals. The mediæval legends of the

were-wolf point to the same practice. The ogre may be the distorted memory of a prehistoric man-eater, though he is probably the ougre, vgar, vngar; the Huns, like other dreaded conquerors, having had to bear the imputation of cannibalism. At the depraved court of Commodus, the most irredeemably bad, perhaps, of all the bad Roman Emperors, we are told that choice morsels of man and woman used to be eaten, not second-hand, as when lampreys in a pond were fattened on slaves, but cut right off the human carcase.

Richard the First's legendary cannibalism was involuntary. Recovering from a fever while engaged in the siege of Acre, he felt an uncontrollable longing for pork; but no pork could be got in that country, where the pig is accounted unclean. What was to be done? The leeches said the king's life was in peril unless his royal will was satisfied, so the cooks undertook to dress the head of a Saracen, spicing it up so daintily that Richard ate of it with great gusto. As the ballad-chronicle has it:

King Richard shall warrant
There is no flesh so nourissant
Unto an Englishman,
Partridge, plover, heron, ne swan,
Cow ne ox, shepe ne swine,
As the hede of a Sarrazine.

So much for hunger as a cause of cannibalism. From motives of religion, man in Western Europe went on eating his fellow-man till Charlemagne's time. His edicts are directed against this practice as well as against eating horseflesh, which was also a religious act, the horse being sacrificed to Odin as the man was to the weird gods of the nether world, or, perhaps, to Hertha, the strange yearly sacrifice to whom in the Isle of Rugen was, Tacitus tells us, marked by the drowning in her sacred lake of a number of human victims. The same drownings went on in the old old time in the Tiber; but before the growth of that Rome which our books tell us about, these victims had been replaced by images made of wicker-work. Still, in times of national danger, the Romans, though they more than once forced the Carthaginians to promise to abstain from human sacrifices, themselves gave way to them. When Hannibal was thundering at their gates, they buried alive in the forum a Greek man and woman, and a Gallic man and woman. On the other side of the world, in Japan, the same mitigation of primitive custom had come about. Of old, when a Mikado died, human victims were slain,

though not on such an extensive scale as in Dahomey. Some centuries before we broke into Japan, the slaying of men and women had been compounded for by the burying of a number of life-size images.

I hinted that the notion about eating one's parent being an honourable custom arose at first out of an ingenious fiction; so did the idea, very widely spread in the South Seas, that by eating a hero you became inspired with his heroic qualities. There is something almost sacramental in this way of disposing of a great man; when once you have made up your mind that the gods are fond of human flesh and blood, you, by sharing in the same, are putting in your claim to be godlike.

Man-eating was probably universal in the Pacific archipelagos. It may have been learned, as I pointed out, during the long canoe voyages; but it exists among the Dyaks, who have not that excuse. Their head-hunters are by no means always content with carrying away all the heads they can cut off in a neighbouring village; they often celebrate their success (says Carl Bock) by feasting on the decapitated bodies, pre-luding the feast with a dance, in which everyone wears a wooden mask, shaped like a crocodile's head. Here is religion. The crocodile, the strong creature who carries down the victim as swiftly as sudden death, is a manifestation of the god, and his worshippers put on his likeness when, by eating man's flesh, they are about to show they are of like nature with him.

The French accuse the Black Flags of eating their prisoners, but they themselves have shown such brutality in this Tonquin war, that possibly they may be trying to palliate their own conduct by wrongly accusing their enemies. It is hard to believe in the cannibalism of such gentle creatures as the Tahitians, but the first of Queen Pomare's hereditary names, Aimara, is clearly a survival. It means, "I eat the eye," and points to a day when the royal ancestor of the elegant lady who so charmed Captain Cook and Dr. Solander used to reserve to him or herself that part of the victim.

The Khonds, and most other hill-tribes of India, have long freed themselves from cannibalism, which, by the way, during the most wasting famines, has never been charged against the mild Hindoo. But the Khonds had—and where they can escape the eye of the English collector still have—their meria, a human

victim, generally stolen or bought from the people of the plains, and fattened up, often for years, till the earth goddess should claim a victim. Then, amid the din of tom-toms and big horns, and the howling of a frenzied crowd, the poor creature was cut to pieces alive, and each head of a family hastily secured his morsel, carried it bleeding round his little patch of land, and then reverently buried it in the middle. Though the flesh-hating Hindoo does not eat his fellow-creatures, he has no objection to wall one of them up in a fortress which he wants to make impregnable. A young maid is supposed to be the best for the purpose. Bhurtpore and other strongholds are said to have had their foundations laid in this way. The custom has spread in both directions. It is found in Eastern Europe; what is that church on the Drave, the legend of which says its tower could no-how be raised; each day's work crumbled down during the night; so the architect, enticing his bride to look at what was being done, pushed her in, walled her up, and then finished his building without further hindrance? It is found in China, and, above all, in Burmah, where they say that when Amarapoora, the old capital, dishonoured by the presence of strangers who came to enforce the treaty that took away Rangoon and all the Burmese seacoast, was abandoned, and Mandalay was made the capital, fifty-two people were buried alive under the different gates of the new city, with the view of making them safe against attack.*

If human sacrifices were celebrated at Carthage with a pomp almost equal to that which horrified the Spaniards in Mexico, man-eating of the grossest kind is found more or less from one end of Africa to the other. One remembers how Stanley, going up the Livingstone river, was met by the cry: "Meat, meat!"—the said meat being man's flesh, as the skulls and thigh-bones showed. Here there was not the excuse of scarcity, for the land was full of rich pastures abounding in cattle. In Kaffirland and farther south are caves full of human bones, the smoke on the roof showing that they have been dwelt in since man knew the use of fire. Were it not that these bones are split for the sake of the marrow, just as in the French bone-caves and in the Scandinavian kitchen-

* The temple which each king of the Ashantees builds in honour of his predecessor is of clay mixed with human blood. Here, and in Dahomey, the "great customs" rival the Spanish tales about the Mexican sacrifices. Human pity seems absolutely non-existent in either people.

midlands, we might fancy that the remains were those of unhappy refugees smoked to death by their relentless enemies, after the plan adopted by Pellissier in Algiers, and by our Natal colonists in the war with Langalibalele, and by the Boers, as a matter of course, whenever one of their "commandos" overtook a tribe that had hidden in the rocks.

But Mexico was, beyond all others, the land of human sacrifices. No doubt the Spaniards exaggerated; Bishop Les Casas says that they did. They wanted an excuse for destroying the whole native society, and making the people hewers of wood and drawers of water. But, all allowance made, too much remains indisputably true. Every god and goddess had a festival of blood, at which the agonies of the victims were gloated over by vast crowds. The heart was torn out and offered to the deity, the face of whose idol was smeared with the warm blood. The Spanish eye-witnesses describe the scene: "They sliced open the poor wretches as one slices a melon," with the *macuahuitl*—a two-handed wooden sword with sharp bits of obsidian set in the blade. The priests and the king had their special portions. If the victim was not a prisoner of war (of war constantly undertaken for the sake of getting victims), but a young Aztec voluntarily offered, the parents received by way of recompense their dainty morsel; the rest was divided amongst the crowd of worshippers. When a prisoner of rank and renown for bravery was sacrificed, with a grim courtesy certain parts were sent to his relations, who acknowledged the gifts by return presents of fine feathers or gold ornaments. The most revolting of many revolting incidents in these ceremonies was that, at some feasts, chosen victims were flayed, and the skin worn by the priests, who, thus clad, says Sahagun, went round, claiming offerings, which no one dared refuse. For these feasts there was the most solemn preparation; the priests fasted rigorously for sixty or eighty days, men and women lived strictly apart for the same time, bleeding themselves occasionally in honour of the god, and abstaining from the baths which formed such an important item in their lives. The number of the victims must have told on the population of the country. Under Montezuma, one thousand two hundred were sacrificed on the "stone of destiny," brought from the Tlascalcan mountains, and set up as an altar. Father Duran is very exact as to

the number killed by Montezuma's predecessor when he inaugurated, in 1487, the great temple of the war god, Huitzilopochtli. He fixes it at sixty-two thousand three hundred and forty-four. Other travellers say about sixty thousand, the number of those who shared in the horrible feast being six millions. At the feast of the fire-god, Xuihteculli, the priest carried the victims to the top of the *teocalli*, and flung them down into a furnace, the crowd, like Spaniards at an auto, or Carthaginians when the children were flung into the red-hot arms of Moloch, watching their agonies with pious edification. A great sacrificial feast was going on where now stands the city of Vera Cruz, at the moment when, in 1518, Juan de Grijalva landed, and struck the knell of the loathsome worship. Writers of Mexican blood have sought to excuse their ancestors because of the lack of domestic animals. But the woods were full of game, and, like the Chinese of to-day, the Mexicans fattened for food dogs of a peculiar breed. That bad priest, Juan de Zumaraga, first Bishop of Mexico, doubtless exaggerated when he estimated the regular yearly tale of victims at twenty thousand; good Bishop Les Casas contradicts him point-blank; but Dr. Hamy's paper (read before the Paris Anthropological Society) based on antiquities preserved in the Madrid Trocadero Museum, and on the *Coleccion de Documentos para la Historia de Mexico*, cannot be gainsaid. When Andres de Tupia and his comrade, Gonzalo de Umbria, tell of a huge tower, built of horizontal beams two feet apart, the interspace being filled with lime, in which were set rows of heads face outwards, the number of heads ("for we counted one row, and then multiplied by the number of rows") being one hundred and thirty-six thousand, one feels there was great exaggeration, but still a basis of fact.

Human heads are the ornament of African village-gates, and of Borneo houses, as they used to be of New Zealand paha. The heads that grin outside our churches have, perhaps, the same origin. Classical Greece and Rome rejected them; they came to us from Central Asia, where baskets full of heads were—till the Russians came—a usual morning present to Khans and Emirs.

The custom, too, of human sacrifice has been spread all over America. Dupratz tells how it was practised by the Natchez, at the death of their

chief, whom they called the Great Sun. They, however, only killed the victims; the Comanches ate them as well. The first colonists of Texas tell of human flesh, ready for cooking, found in camps, out of which the Comanches had retreated. In Brazil there are still at least six cannibal tribes, and others whose custom it is for mothers to eat their dead children, pounding up the bones with maize, the mourning lasting till the last vestige is consumed.

The Peruvians, who may have got their culture from China, were a great contrast to the Mexicans; they only offered now and then a single victim to the sun, and never, so far as I can learn, devoured the sacrifice. They had got rid of the habits of the earliest Americans, in whose kitchen-middens in the north (by Lake Monro, in Florida, and on the coast of Maine) and in the Brazilian prehistoric "Sambaquis," Wyman, and Hardy, and other archaeologists have found the same sort of split and gnawed bones as are found in European and African and Siberian caves. Of course one makes allowance for travellers' tales, for the too-human look of the head bobbing about in a cauldron of Nicaraguan monkey-soup leading the disgusted stranger to put down in his note-book: "I sat at a cannibal feast;" and also for archaeologists mistaking for the remnants of feasts the accumulated bone-heaps made when Indian tribes reburied their dead; for race-hatred laying abominable sins to the charge of enemies—as the old accusation of kneading their paschal-bread with a virgin's blood has been brought just lately against the Jews in Hungary; for exceptional ferocity—as when Juvenal records that in the riot between Coptos and Tentyra, a Coptite, who had got trampled on, was torn to pieces and eaten raw by the Tentyra people; and when in the voodoo ceremonies among West Indian negroes, the chief dancer, wild with excitement, points out a victim—usually a fowl or a kid, but sometimes (as was proved at a trial in 1864 at Port au Prince, when eight of the sect were sentenced to death) a child—which is straightway devoured. But, all allowance made, we must admit that man is a man-eating animal, and that the old custom—like other old customs—dies very hard. It is dying, often with the dying out of those addicted to it. Things are bettering; the African man-hunts, which so vexed Gordon's righteous soul, are bad enough; but better enslave your prisoner,

and send him northward across the Soudan, or pack him off in a dhow to some Arabian port, than sit down and eat him in honour of your god.

I trust our modern archaeologists are right in taking the "rock basins, with channels to let out the blood," so common in the granite of Devon and Cornwall, and the millstone-grit of the North Derbyshire and Yorkshire moorlands, to be merely water-holes caused by the rain-drip. But there is no reason, in the nature of man, why they should not be what the antiquaries (very different people from archaeologists) fancied them. Our burial-clubs used to show, till due precautions were taken, that if our mothers do not eat their dead children, they do not scruple to kill them for a consideration. Indeed, I should not like to answer for English people, any more than for any other people, not turning cannibals in a case where some overmastering superstition gave an edge to actual want.

A WIRE FRAME.

A STORY IN THREE CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

"THE best-laid schemes o' mice an' men gang aft alee." Perfectly true, Robert Burns; I endorse your sentiment. How often have I come to the same conclusion as I sat by my lonely fire! Here am I, Jeremiah Hawkins, as much of an esquire as most of those so called, by my own deliberate choice a single man, and remaining single for the express purpose of avoiding the cares and worries, and, above all, the endless commissions that make the lives of married men a weariness to them; here am I, persecuted, imposed on—in fact, fairly used up—not only by nieces, cousins, sisters-in-law, and other relatives, but actually, also, by those who are no blood relations at all, and yet act as if they possessed an affinity that, after all, to my mind, is a very doubtful claim on one's services. I wonder, now, what would be an actual advantage in this life. I used to think a home in a village would be something of the kind—away from the hurry and din of a crowded town; but, as time goes on, we find out our own mistakes, and this has been one of mine. I have lived in a village now for some years—a pretty little village in a picturesque neighbourhood, with a reputation for being particularly healthy, and it seems to be from this cause that there is for ever someone wanting "just to look in on me"—that is

the favourite phrase, and it means, so far as I know, a good long visit. Some of my nieces "have outgrown their strength" (they are all quite too tall); Lily, or Jeanie, or one of the rest, "is so pale and washy; a little while in your splendid air would be of such use to them;" or Joe, or Jem, or some of the numerous Jerrys—they seem all to have called their boys after me—"have been cramming for examinations, and they do so require a change." This is the way they go on, and I shouldn't mind having them one at a time, only that I feel they are all just making a convenience of me. I say one at a time, because my second brother's wife, Juliana, came down on me once with her twin babies and nurse, and nearly drove me to subside into lodgings, and leave the house to them until they had done with it.

This, however, is only one phase of the persecution that pursues me, because, as the invaders of my peace take care to assure me, "You are a single man, you know, Mr. Hawkins"—of course I know that, but I don't see what good it's doing me—"and you have plenty of time," or "You have spare rooms in your house, and I just wanted to ask this little favour from you;" and so they go on, and I have not courage to resist them and bring down on myself the reproaches sure to be heaped on me, though I might not hear them.

However, what I am about to complain of, is the annoyance that has come upon me by some neighbours of mine asking me to "do a little commission" for them. These people are merely neighbours, nothing more. They live a little way down the village street, but they are quite as near as I wish them to be, for, as it is, I can't pass my own doorstep without their in some way finding out where I am going, and if it be to town, where business takes me every now and then, no attempt that I can make to baffle them will save me from being asked, "just to do a little commission."

I don't think I'll stand it again; that last commission has been enough for me. The lease of my house is nearly out. My landlord is theirs as well, and if he is going to keep Mrs. Tattleton as a tenant, why, I'll go elsewhere.

Mrs. Tattleton has three unmarried daughters, tall, powerful-looking damsels, all moderately young, and said to bear a strong resemblance to their father, the late Major Tattleton. This warrior, however, had gone the way of all the

earth before I, fixing my abode in the village of Hazeldene, became acquainted with his surviving family. They must surely be good young women, these Miss Tattletons, or their mother never could praise them as she does, and she cannot have any hidden motive for extolling them to me, because, from the time I first came to Hazeldene, I have made it known in every way I could, without absolutely advertising the fact, that I am not a marrying man. However, had I wished to marry one, or all, of her daughters, I could not desire fuller information regarding them than Mrs. Tattleton has gratuitously given me. I know all their good domestic qualities, among which, I am assured, economy takes a prominent place, in proof of which their mother has more than once confided to me that "her daughters make their own dresses."

This fact, which, of course, is interesting to those whom it concerns, had been well established in my mind by my having on several occasions been employed to bring them from town fashion magazines or books. I should mention that "town," in Hazeldene parlance means the county-town, and such is the secluded position of our village, that to reach this central point one has to go nearly half a mile to a ferry, cross a river in an open boat, and then make one's way to the railway-station by a ten minutes' walk up a lane. From all this it will be seen that the facilities for communication, so much boasted of as a feature of the present age, are not yet fully developed at Hazeldene.

On returning from my usual walk, one day lately, I found awaiting me a three-cornered note, the appearance of which, even before I touched it, at once brought to me a suggestion of Mrs. Tattleton, which proved to be correct, for inside was written a request from that lady for the pleasure of my company that afternoon at five-o'clock tea.

I could not well refuse, having passed their windows in perfect health an hour before, and they knowing, as well as I did myself, that I had no occupation to hinder me from going anywhere. Mrs. Tattleton seemed sure of my acquiescence, for her note stated that an answer was not required. So when five o'clock was near I strolled leisurely down to their house. Being a November afternoon there was little light, save what came from the shops in the village street which are interspersed with private houses. We are a careful people in

Hazeldene, and don't light our street-lamps too early.

I was apparently Mrs. Tattleton's favoured guest, for there was no other, and I must certainly say in her praise that the tea she offers to a guest is both hot and strong, very different to the watery, lukewarm decoction that makes five-o'clock tea in some houses a snare and a delusion.

The visit passed pleasantly enough, the young ladies and their mother were very agreeable until just before I was coming away, when I was unpleasantly startled by a question from Miss Annette, the second girl. Putting her head on one side, much as a robin does when it is watching for crumbs, she asked me in the most innocent way possible if I were likely soon to be in town. Now, I had kept it a close secret that I was going there the next day. In no possible way could the Tattletons have known it; but I have thought since they must have remembered my taking a similar journey at the end of November in the previous year.

Feeling that I could neither conceal nor deny my present intention, but with a distinct consciousness of what was coming, I replied coolly, "that I might, perhaps, run up to-morrow."

"Oh, then," said Selina, the youngest girl, clasping her hands in a beseeching kind of way, "would you just do a little commission for us? We should all be so very much obliged. Would you now, Mr. Hawkins, just bring us a wire frame that has been waiting at Messrs. Fixem and Fitem's until some friend would kindly call for it?"

Selina is the best-looking of these young women, and the most moderate in size; her suppliant air partly subdued my rising annoyance, as once again I felt myself victimised; for seldom, if ever, from the time I became acquainted with Mrs. Tattleton and her daughters, had I gone to Conway, our county-town, without being pressed into their service by a commission, and, as I have already intimated, if there is one thing I hate more than another, it is having this sort of thing put upon me. In this instance also there was the additional irritation of feeling that I had been invited to their house for this express purpose, thus fairly walking into the snare laid for me.

Probably I hesitated a little in replying, for a chorus of voices rose around me with assurances that "it was quite light; so easily carried; they would be so much

obliged. Messrs. Fixem and Fitem had been waiting quite a long time to get someone to bring it—someone who would be careful; it is only a friend that one can depend on for this sort of thing. We knew you would not think it a trouble; only, dear Mr. Hawkins"—this from the mother—"you will be sure to take care of it, won't you, now? You see, if it were crushed——" But what would happen in that case I did not hear, for, as Mrs. Tattleton paused at the suggestion, I felt myself compelled to say something.

There was, of course, an implied compliment in thus asking me to do what they insinuated that none but a friend could be trusted with; and four ladies joining in a chorus of request, not to call it entreaty, would bewilder a more self-possessed man than I am. So, like a simpleton, instead of enquiring about this thing that I was to bring with such caution, and finding out what its size and nature might be, I began to utter platitudes about being very happy to do anything for them, begging them not to talk of trouble, and so on, and finally took my leave amidst an avalanche of thanks, which, however, went a very short way in stifling my consciousness of having been outwitted, and once more made a tool of, and that after so positively assuring myself it never should be the case again.

Fixem and Fitem's was a millinery shop, where I had already paid several visits on behalf of the Tattleton family. On this occasion, after having discharged the business which had taken me to town, I once more made my way there, inwardly resolving that next time I was coming to Conway no ingenious device of my neighbours should find it out.

Addressing the peripatetic individual who enquires into the wants of the customers, I said:

"Mrs. Tattleton, of Hazeldene, has requested me to ask for a wire frame that she had ordered."

The man seemed acquainted with the matter, and asked where it should be sent.

"I will take it with me," I replied. "Mrs. Tattleton asked me not to lose sight of it as it required great care."

"Oh, ah!—yes, sir, but I think we had better send it for you, unless," he added suddenly, "perhaps, sir, you have a conveyance waiting?"

"Not at all; can't I take it in my hand?"

The man shook his head.

"Well, send it to The Royal Hotel; I'll be going from that to the Great Southern Station."

"In their 'bus, perhaps, sir?"

"Yes."

"Well, sir, they pass here, and if you would make them pull up, we'll bring it out."

This seemed all right. I went to the hotel for luncheon, and started in the 'bus for the three o'clock train.

It was market-day, and we soon got very crowded, I keeping my seat at the door that I might receive this wire frame, which somehow had shaped itself, to my mind, as being a little thing belonging to fancy-work, as I had seen ladies doing something with coloured wools on small square frames held in one hand.

"Pull up," I said to the conductor as we turned into Moon Street; "pull up at Fixem and Fitem's; they have a small parcel for me."

The man rather growled at pulling up for a parcel, but the wandering shopman appeared at the door the moment we stopped, and I thrust my head out and beckoned to him, telling the conductor at the same time to give the parcel to me, for however annoyed I had been at having this commission forced upon me, I nevertheless intended to take the wire frame home as carefully as if it belonged to me.

We had waited for less than a minute when a porter came out of the shop carrying what looked like something fresh from the guillotine—a headless figure, wrapped in dark drapery. As I looked at it in the man's arms it never occurred to me that I had anything to do with it, until the conductor, seizing it, said to me, "Can't take that inside, sir," and he hoisted it up on the roof.

Another man was following carrying a stand with a pole stuck in it.

"Here you go," said he; it went up after the other, and we moved on.

"My parcel!" I shouted to the man at the door. "Give me my parcel;" whereupon, apparently by his directions, the porter pursued us until he was close enough to call out:

"Mrs. Tattleton, of Hazeldene—that's hers," and I had by no means recovered from my astonishment when we stopped at the station.

The day had changed, and heavy rain was falling. I went to look for a porter, and meeting a man whom I knew, I asked him to come for "my luggage," I called it.

The time was nearly up, and there was a good deal of jostling and confusion among a crowd of market-people.

Davy, my porter friend, came along the platform, grinning as he ran, with the draped headless figure in his arms, and set it down beside me.

"Glad to see the missus is come home, sir," said he; "single gen'l'men has no need for the like o' these"; and he ran back for the stand.

The covering that was over the thing had become partly disarranged, and I saw that my commission consisted of the safe-bringing to Hazeldene of a wire framework the full length of the tall Miss Tattletons without their heads; being also of suitable circumference, and having attached to it an appendix, called, as I afterwards learned, a "crinolette," which consisted of an additional section of wirework to be removed at pleasure.

The whole affair, before I had done with it, enlightened me considerably as to the intricacies of feminine attire.

The bell rang.

"Take your seats!" shouted the guard.

"Put that in!" I called to him, pointing to the draped figure as I ran down the platform.

"Aye, aye," he answered, and in the hurrying crowd I saw Davy coming with the pole, and, jumping into my carriage, we were off, and I began to wonder how I was to get this wretched thing conveyed without bruise or breakage through the changes that awaited it on leaving the train.

Hazeldene Station is above an hour from Conway. I could scarcely get over the ferry by daylight, and the thick rain that was falling would bring darkness sooner. Altogether, I was excessively annoyed. If they had even told me frankly what they wanted me to do, I should have taken it better; but to be led into a job like this in such a sly way! The irritation of it all was well up to boiling-point by the time we drew near Hazeldene Station, and I gathered up my belongings to get out. What was my horror to find we were passing on without stopping! I put my head out of the window, and shouted vainly for the guard, in return for which I got my eyes full of hot ashes, and drew back, angry and smarting, to the solitude of a carriage all to myself.

Blackpool, the next station, would not be reached for forty minutes, and I should have to wait there until the next train came up at seven o'clock. It was already

beginning to get dark, and the rain was falling in one steady, unmitigated down-pour.

"Trains changed to-day, sir," was the guard's reply to my angry address as I got out on the platform at Blackpool. "Mid-day carries mail now, and makes few stoppages." And he hastily passed on, and in another minute, seeing the passengers were out, began to blow his whistle.

"Stop—stop," I cried. "I haven't got all my things."

I had two hampers and some parcels, one of which I was in the act of rescuing from a man who was taking it away instead of his own.

"This yours?" cried the guard, pitching out a hamper.

"Yes, and a wire frame—give me out the frame!" I cried, running alongside the train, which was a long one, and had begun to move.

"Nothing of the kind here!" he shouted from his van-door.

"Yes, there is—there is!" I vociferated.

"Send it up by next train," cried the guard; and they quickened speed, and were off.

The line here runs through a stretch of land reclaimed but lately from the sea, and the intense dreariness of the outlook on that November evening was indescribable. The fading light revealed but one vast swamp, crossed here and there with wide, canal-like ditches full of dark water, while at intervals the uniformity of the flat, wet surface was broken by mounds of black sea-wrack, that, dark and shapeless, added to the gloom around.

The station itself was a long open shed, having a small office at one end, while at the other there was a little waiting-room with a bare floor, a table in the middle, and some wooden chairs round the sides. A fireless grate completed its inhospitable character, and I gladly accepted the station-master's offer of a seat at the stove in his office. Here I learned all the particulars of the changes among the trains, which came into operation on that day.

"The train you came by was late," continued my informant; "they had a good deal to make up when they left this. Denny isn't used to this line?"

"Who's Denny?" I asked.

"The guard; he belongs to the upper line. I don't know how he happens to be down here."

And as he said it I remembered that

the guard at the Conway Station, who told me he would put the wire frame in, was not the same man I had seen here at Blackpool, and now I understood why he did not give it out with the readiness he might have done, as in the long, closely-packed van he did not know where to put his hand on it.

At length, at seven o'clock, the lights of the approaching up-train were seen. There was no one to get in but myself, and as the guard opened a door for me I asked eagerly if he had brought up a wire frame that the last down train took on by mistake.

"All right, sir, I've got it," said he, shutting the door and leaving me to meditate upon how I was to get the thing conveyed from the Hazeldene station to the village of the same name, considering the transit must include, first a long, muddy lane, and then a ferry-boat and a half-hour's walk on the other side. It was now quite dark, with close, heavy rain falling, through which, when we got to the Hazeldene station, their small lamp scarcely showed.

"Got all now, sir?" said the station-master, pushing in my parcels from the edge of the platform; the station did not boast a porter.

"All! No; there's a frame—a wire frame." I was beginning to hate the very name of it.

"It's here, sir, all right," cried the guard, jumping in and whistling; and putting the last button in my waterproof, I advanced to where Evans, the station-master, lantern in hand, was inspecting some crates and other things left by the train, my hampers among them.

"Where's the wire frame?" I asked, not at first seeing it in the dim light.

"Here, sir," said Evans, "and a useful article it is;" and before my indignant gaze he held up a long-shaped wire rat-trap.

"That's not it!" I shouted.

"It's all there is for it, then," said he; "that's what they left out."

"Ferry-boat waiting, sir," said a boy, coming up; "father says will you come on; it's that wet, the boat's nigh swamped."

Angry and indignant I stumbled on along the muddy lane, the ferry-boy splashing on before with my parcels; and when we got into the boat, beginning steadily to bale out the rain-pool at the bottom.

By the time we reached the other side I had made up my mind to slip home without letting the Tattletons know I had come, and to go off again early next morning in

search of their abominable frame, for to have them telling everyone I had lost the thing, after all the cautions they gave me, would be worse than even the trouble and vexation it was causing me.

Wet, muddy, and dispirited, I reached the village, and took a back way to my own house, lest Mrs. Tattleton's prying servants might be peeping out and see me.

My housekeeper, a discreet woman, by her look alone expressed the astonishment she felt when I told her to have breakfast for me early the next morning, as I was obliged to go away again, and that I particularly wished her not to let anyone know I had been at home this night.

Never during all the years she had lived with me had the woman seen mystery in my doings until now, and it was in evident alarm that she promised obedience.

The frame must have been left behind at Conway, and I would go and bring it by the first train I could get back in.

But no; on reaching Conway the next morning I was met by protestations from the railway-officials that the wire figure was not there, but had been put into the train I went by on the previous day; the guard was not to be seen, as he had gone away to get married, and had a fortnight's leave of absence; but Davy, the porter, and the other guard who had called out to me that the figure was in the van, adhered to their statements, the porter being equally certain that he put in the stand. Denny, the man who had gone to be married, must have taken the frame on to Southport, where the line ended; they would telegraph there, and have it sent back at once.

Meantime, I went to Fixem and Fitem's, and rated them for not having addressed the thing properly, as, had they done so, the railway-people declared it could not have gone astray. Back to the station to find the telegraph ran, "Nothing of the kind here. Denny gone to Scotland—address not known."

The Conway station-master kept assuring me, "it would turn up; nothing was ever lost on their line; and an article so remarkable in its appearance was the least likely to go astray. He would have a few little handbills struck off, and sent to all the stations along the line; it had evidently been put out at some of them—probably at the junction where two branch lines met, and a number of passengers always changed carriages." Meantime, I returned to the hotel to await the issue.

CHAPTER II.

THAT afternoon I met, on the steps of the hotel, a cousin whom I had not seen for several years, Harry Sandford. I knew his regiment had returned to England some time back; but I never thought of seeing him in this part of the country, nor did he account for being there in any very lucid or rational manner.

All I could make out was that he was going to attend the hunt ball, which was about to be held in Conway, and he had been spending his morning, along with some of the stewards, superintending the arrangements; a new building lately erected for public purposes being about to be used for the first time.

"You'll be at the ball, of course?" he said.

But I had no such intention, and found rather a difficulty in saying why I was in Conway at all.

"My head-quarters are here at present," said Harry, "till after the ball, at any rate; but I am just off to the country for a day or two. Shall I find you here when I come back?"—a matter on which I could not myself form any opinion, and therefore put him off with an evasive answer.

Not for a trifle would I have let him know what was keeping me there, for, always an insufferable quiz, he seemed at present half bursting with fun and spirits—a very decided contrast to the boredom and worry of my sensations; but then Harry is a great deal younger than I am, and probably never had anything to do with a lady's wire frame.

The handbills were to go out that evening, and if the thing were to be found at all, it would be heard of in a day or two.

The early morning post brought me an invitation to the ball, signed by Vincent Acton, one of the ball-committee and stewards. I felt I must be indebted for this to Harry Sandford, for I knew no one of the name of Acton, though it was not an uncommon one in the county. In fact, circumstances which led me to fix my abode in the remote village of Hazeldene had made me a recluse more than half misanthropical, and I had gradually fallen out of intimacy with former associates, and was probably little remembered by them. The sudden meeting with my cousin Sandford was like an unexpected glimpse into a different existence from mine, out of which all life and fun and go-aheadness had passed away, and which I began to feel was becoming dull and vapid under the determination to avoid all trouble and worry.

On the second morning of my stay at The Royal Hotel, I had just done breakfast, when a waiter came to tell me that "a person wished to see me."

"What kind of person?" I asked.

"Well, sir, I suppose a lady—leastwise, she told me to say so."

"Show her up," I said, thinking it was someone from Fixem and Fitem's, perhaps with news of the frame.

In walked a smart, perky-looking woman of about thirty, well dressed, and energetic-looking. She took the chair I offered her, and beginning to talk rapidly, informed me she had come up from the country to see me regarding a wire-framed figure that she understood I was looking for. I eagerly assented, and she continued:

"I assure you, sir, I never was so sorry for anything as that I had the ill-fortune to have anything to do with it; which if I had known where it came from I'd have gone without rather than use it, Fixem and Fitem's being that vulgar a place that though I don't deny but I served a part of my time there, it's not but I found out what a vulgar place it is, and I left them; and I wouldn't give an order for my ladies there—not at all."

"But have you got the frame?" I began.

"That's what I'm saying, sir, and two rings I've had to cut off at the bottom; it has been Goliath, I think, they took the measure of for it, and the vulgar crinolette they had on it, just twice too big. Salvage and Sample's is the place to get a proper figure, but I just had to make it do——"

"Make it do! but I want it for the owner. How on earth did you get it?"

"Under a mistake, sir, I assure you. Do you think I'd have Fixem's big, clumsy thing? I've had to squeeze it in at the waist, and had to take the bulges out of its sides; my hands," and she pulled one of them out of her muff and looked at it, "they're not the better yet of pulling at it, for my ladies, they are ladies, and neat and small every way, as a lady should be, and Miss Acton, she says to me, 'I must go to Conway and 'pologise for the mistake'; and I just says to her back again, for I can make free with them, they're none of your setting-up upstarts, 'Miss Acton,' says I, 'I think it's the gentleman should 'pologise to us, for him letting that figure loose on the rail coming to us under a mistake.'"

"Where is it now?" I asked in exasperation; "have you brought it?"

"Law, sir, no! and the hunt ball to be next week, and me gettin' leave to order a figure; seeing the way the skirts are now, you can't give them a right set wantin' one. Ladies doesn't like to make figures of themselves, standing till you pin the trimmings on them."

"Will you tell me what you've come here for?" I said, striving to keep my temper.

"Beg your pardon, sir, for interrupting you at your breakfast; it was all along of Miss Acton thinking I ought to explain to you, and I had to come up any way to match my young ladies' trimmings, though, of course, Miss Jessie she's going all in white, being her first ball, and Captain Sandford, he's nigh killed himself laughing about you, sir, losing your figure, and sending out the advertisements. I had to show it to him, and Miss Acton's pink brocade pinned on it, and he said he'd make you tell him all about the lady you were taking it to, and what sort of a size she was."

"Captain Sandford!" I said in astonishment, "what's he got to do with it?"

"Oh, I beg your pardon, sir, but Miss Acton said he was a friend of yours; and of course it's not for me to be talking of family matters—not but the whole country'll soon know it, for he'll be at the ball with them, and a proud man he may be, for where's the like of our Miss Mabel, and plenty of gentlemen dying about her?"

A light broke in upon my brain regarding my Cousin Harry, and with it a foreboding of what it would be to meet him after all this.

Acton—Vincent Acton—was the name that accompanied the ticket sent me for the ball. Harry might have told me about it. Was he engaged to this Miss Mabel, and was it going to see her that put him into such outrageous spirits?

Why should life be so hilarious to him, and so heavy and uninteresting to me?

If the affair of this abominable frame were settled I'd go off to the Sandwich Islands, or any place where there'd be no one to worry me with commissions or bother me with ill-timed fun.

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